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FM PARIS  
TO PRIORITY FCO  
TELNO 270  
OF 131546Z MARCH 86

MY TELNO 250 (PARA 4): FRENCH ELECTIONS: MITTERRAND.

## SUMMARY.

1. MITTERRAND APPEARS FIT ENOUGH TO STAY IN THE ELYSEE AND HAS UNDIMINISHED APPETITE FOR POWER. HE IS KEEPING THE RPR/UDF UNCERTAIN AND ANXIOUS ABOUT HOW HE WILL PLAY HIS HAND AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

## DETAIL

2. MITTERRAND OCCASIONALLY LOOKS TIRED AND JADED, AND THERE ARE RECURRENT RUMOURS ABOUT HIS HEALTH. HOWEVER WHEN I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE HIM CLOSELY AT AN ELYSEE INVESTITURE CEREMONY ON 11 MARCH HE APPEARED RELAXED, CONFIDENT AND VERY MUCH IN CONTROL. THE CEREMONY INVOLVED THE PRESENTATION OF VARIOUS AWARDS TO EIGHT INDIVIDUALS. MITTERRAND GAVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND WORKS OF EACH OF THEM WITHOUT A NOTE OR PAUSE, BEFORE CALLING THEM FORWARD BY THEIR FULL NAMES (AGAIN FROM MEMORY) TO BE DECORATED: IT WAS A REMARKABLE AND FLAWLESS 40 MINUTE PERFORMANCE. HE STAYED ON TO TALK TO GUESTS FOR ANOTHER HOUR, GIVING NO HINT OF BEING IN THE MIDDLE OF EITHER AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN OR A GRAVE HOSTAGE CRISIS.

3. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION HE EXPRESSED SATISFACTION ABOUT THE STATE OF ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS: HE EVIDENTLY REGARDS IT AS AN AREA WITH NO REAL PROBLEMS ABOUT WHICH HE NEED CONCERN HIMSELF AT PRESENT. I SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO CONCLUDE THE DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PROMOTERS ON THE CHANNEL FIXED LINK SO THAT THE DOSSIER COULD BE TIDIED AWAY THIS WEEK. HE RESPONDED UNHESITATINGLY THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD INDEED BE CONCLUDED THIS WEEK AND THAT HE WAS NOT HIMSELF FUSSED ABOUT THE OUTSTANDING DETAILS. (WE HAVE SINCE BEEN TRYING TO ENSURE THAT FRENCH OFFICIALS ARE AWARE OF AND ACT ON THIS STATEMENT.) I ALSO SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT THE PRESENT HOSTAGE CRISIS POINTED TO THE NEED FOR CLOSER AND MORE WHOLE-HEARTED COOPERATION BETWEEN WESTERN GOVERNMENTS IN DEALING WITH TERRORIST MOVEMENTS. HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO TALK ABOUT THIS BEYOND SAYING THAT HE DID NOT SEE WHAT WAS TO BE DONE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION OTHER THEN RESIST BLACKMAIL. (IT IS IN FACT CLEAR THAT HE IS MAKING A FINAL ALL-OUT EFFORT TO SECURE THE RELEASE OF AT LEAST SOME OF THE FRENCH HOSTAGES BEFORE 16 MARCH.)

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4. MY IMPRESSION IS THAT HE IS PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY CAPABLE OF CONTINUING AS PRESIDENT AND THAT HE HAS AN UNDIMINISHED WILL TO DO SO. HIS RESPONSE TO THE ELECTION RESULTS ON SUNDAY WILL NOT LACK RESOURCEFULNESS. THE RUMOUR THAT HE MIGHT CONTEMPLATE EARLY RESIGNATION IN ORDER TO FORCE A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (MY TUR) HAS NOW BEEN PICKED UP IN THE PRESS AND IS BEING TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY. I WILL ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE THIS AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES IN A FINAL PRE-ELECTION ROUND-UP TOMORROW.

FRETWELL

EUROPEAN POLITICAL  
WED.

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